

Newsline

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October 1996

Montanans Make The Case For Rural Transportation

Are Montana's Federal Transportation Funds In Jeopardy?

Due to ISTEA reauthorization, Federal funding for Highway and Transit Programs is set to expire September 30, 1997. Montana transportation officials are gearing up to save allocated Federal funds.

*"Montana is not rural--it's mega rural, it's hyper rural,"
- First Lady Hillary Clinton*

These officials together with other Montanans interested in the future of the Federal Highway and Transit Programs gathered in Missoula on August 20 to give a rural perspective to the US Department of Transportation (USDOT). This regional forum on

Key points made to the Senator and Secretary included:

- √ Highways in the rural west need a high level of Federal investment.
- √ The Federal program should be simplified giving more authority to state and local levels to decide where funds are spent.

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WHAT'S REAUTHORIZATION?

Congress establishes and funds Federal programs through two separate legislative processes:

- ◆ Multi-year authorization of program legislation to define structure and targets for future expenditures.
- ◆ Annual appropriation of program funds.

For the Federal Highway and Transit Programs, the authorizing legislation expires on September 30, 1997. Since late 1991 the current authorizing act, known as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act or ISTEA, has been the basis for delivery of the nation's transportation programs. ISTEA began a new era in transportation planning and public involvement, created the National Highway System and provided for moderate growth in Montana's transportation programs. Intense debate is anticipated next year regarding the components of the next authorizing act.

Although details of the next program are not yet defined, it is certain the relative distribution of highway program funds between states will be on the table. A recent bill introduced by Senator Connie Mack of Florida and Representative John Kasich of Ohio would turn back most of the Federal taxation authority for transportation to the states. If this bill is enacted, it would be devastating for Montana because Montana's state level fuel tax would have to increase by twenty cents a gallon just to keep funding at current levels.



Senator Baucus & Secretary Peña

reauthorization was hosted by Sen. Max Baucus and USDOT Secretary Federico Peña, with twelve panelists providing live testimony. In addition to testimony at the University of Montana host site, speakers also delivered their messages via an interactive televideo conferencing system from sites in the Dakotas, Wyoming, Colorado and Utah.

This forum, one of twelve outreach hearings sponsored by the USDOT Secretary's Office, is the only one to focus on rural transportation topics.

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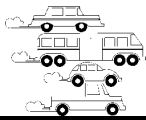
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MDT Planning Division Updates



MDT City Park Rest Area Program

The City Park Rest Area (CPRA) Program was launched by MDT in the spring of 1991. This State-funded Program provides up to \$100,000 per site for communities to build or improve local park facilities to serve as safety rest areas on Primary or NHS routes. In exchange for this funding, the communities agree to maintain the rest area facilities for a minimum of ten years, and keep them open 24 hours a day during the peak travel season (usually April 15-November 15).



Twin Bridges CPRA

Twin Bridges, Plentywood, Harlowton, Malta, Chester and Fort Belknap received funding for CPRA's in the early 1990's.

The 1995 Legislature approved funding for nine additional rest areas to be under contract by June 30, 1997.

Agreements were recently signed for rest area facilities in Big Sandy, Roundup and Whitefish, and several other communities have expressed an interest in participating in the program.

This Program provides much-needed funds for improvements within the community, contributes

to local economic development efforts, and benefits travelers.

Based on the positive comments we have received from the participating

communities, the program has been very successful.

For more information regarding CPRA contact Jan Vogel (406) 444-4262 or E-Mail U9340@long.mdt.mt.gov.

Planning Division Welcomes New Members

Maureen Stohl, most recently employed at the Department of Environmental Quality, has joined the Planning Division as Fiscal Officer. Her responsibilities include supervising the administrative staff and overseeing the Division's Budget.

Dave Dreher has also joined the Planning Division as Information Officer. Just a few of the things he will be handling include public involvement and publicity for commission meetings, bid lettings and contract awards.

You can reach Maureen at (406)444-6100 E-Mail-U8655@long.mdt.mt.gov or Dave at (406)444-6245 E-Mail-U2272@long.mdt.mt.gov. Please give them a call if you have any questions or would like to welcome them.



THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING NEWSLINE is published quarterly by the Montana Department of Transportation, Transportation Planning Division. The preparation of this newsletter is financed through the Federal Highway Administration's Statewide Planning and Research Program. Articles appearing in the Transportation Planning Newsletter are contributed by the staff of the MDT Transportation Planning Division.

1996 Bus Rodeo

The 1996 MDT Montana Transit Association Annual Bus Rodeo was held in Great Falls on August 17-18.

Contestants competed in two categories: Paratransit Buses and full size (30 feet and over) buses. Winners of each category received a trip to the national competitions.

This years winners were:

Wayne Colman of Native Americans Senior Citizens Council in St. Ignatius for paratransit bus classification and **Dick Dahlen** of Great Falls Transit in the full-size bus class.

The victory for Colman was his second in as many years. He will travel to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in the spring of 1997, while Dahlen will go to Anaheim, California this fall.

Congratulations to both and good luck in the finals.



Wayne Colman



Dick Dahlen



MDT Planning Division Updates



Vern Littell Receives Incentive Award

Vern Littell of MDT's Transit Section received an incentive award of \$100 for the development of a demonstration platform to secure wheelchairs. This platform is used in the Passenger Assistance Service



and Safety training classes for transit bus drivers.

Vern is one of the instructors for this program and recognized that training drivers to secure wheelchairs, while inside a bus, was very difficult. Vern designed and built the wheelchair tie down platform which is portable and can be used directly in the classroom. Now all participants are able to get a clear picture of how to correctly maneuver a wheelchair into place and secure it. The driver can now actually have "hands-on" experience.

Congratulations Vern & Thanks!

Draft STIP Reaches More Than Ever

The 1997-1999 draft Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) process gained wider distribution than ever before via many different channels.

The draft STIP was released to the public for the 45-day comment period on June 14, 1996.

STIP Process channels of distribution included: **1.)** A focus story and featured article in the June 1996 edition of Newsline. (This publication reaches more than four thousand individuals.) **2.)** Press releases to all Montana daily and weekly newspapers. (An unprecedented 40% of the statewide papers published this press release for a total circulation exposure of nearly 150,000 subscribers.) **3.)** Availability on MDT's nationally recognized and award-winning Internet Web Site. (<http://www.mdt.mt.gov>) **4.)** A toll-free telephone line for anyone wishing to order a copy of the draft STIP or provide comments. (1-800-714-7296)

Although the STIP was widely distributed, the Project Analysis Section received very few public comments on the proposed three year transportation plans. According to section supervisor Jeff Ebert, "In the past, we've regularly received about 100 comments on the STIP each year; this year we received less than 15. We hope this means the public is satisfied with the quality of service the Department is providing."

Although the 45-day public comment period for the 1997 draft STIP has ended, the Department encourages the public to submit comments and suggestions at any time. The final version of the 1997-1999 STIP will be available to the public after October 1, 1996. To request a copy please call 1-800-714-7296.

Transportation Planning Division Telephone Numbers

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call **1-800-714-7296** (in Montana only), or **(406) 444-3423**.
TDD (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592

Administrator (Patricia Saindon) . 444-3143
CTEP (Mike Davis) 444-4383
Mapping (Joe O'Neil) 444-6119
Multimodal Planning
 (John Craig) 444-6370
Projects (Jeff Ebert) 444-7639
Public Involvement
 (Dave Dreher) 444-6245
Rail Planning (Jan Vogel) 444-4262
Secondary Roads (Gary Larson) .. 444-6110
Statistics (Rick Rogne) 444-6111
Traffic Safety (Albert Goke) 444-7301
Traffic Statistics (Dan Bisom) 444-6122
Transit (Janis Winston) 444-4210
Urban Planning (Ross Tervo) 444-3445
ITS Planning (Dennis Hult) 444-9237
Newsline Editor (Sally Yarnall) ... 444-3475

Transportation Planning: A Two-Way Street MDT's First Annual Transportation Planning Conference "Working with MDT"

"...this is a time to learn more about us as we learn more about you..."

October 23-24

**Grouse Mountain Lodge
Whitefish, Montana**

AGENDA INCLUDES:

Road Inventory, Mapping, and Traffic Data Collection Processes; Traffic Safety Issues; Management Systems and ITS; System Impact Analysis and Partnering/Innovative Financing; Transit Issues; CTEP; Programming Projects; TranPlan 21 and MDT's Internet Home Page.

For further information contact Jan Vogel at 1-800-714-7296 or (406) 444-4262 or E-Mail U9340@long.mdt.mt.gov - TDD (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592

Montana Celebrates the 40th Anniversary of the Interstate System



The Interstate Comes to Be...

On June 29, 1956, President Eisenhower signed a bill that created the Interstate Highway System and effected every American's life. Montana began construction of it's share of the Interstate System in 1958. Following 30 years of hard labor and many challenges, Montana completed its 1,191 miles of Interstate at a cost of \$1,226,060,000.

In commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of the Interstate Highway System, MDT's Planning Division, in conjunction with the Montana Contractors Association, developed a display containing historical information, construction details, photos, and future projections of what it will take to maintain our Interstate.

Some Facts Gathered...

Did you know.....

- » The life span of Interstate pavement is approximately 12 years.
- » Within the next decade virtually all of Montana's Interstate pavement will need maintenance or improvements.
- » The estimated 10 year cost to continue the excellence of Montana's Interstate is more than a half billion dollars.
- » In 1996 Montana received \$34 million from the Federal Highway Program for Interstate pavement needs.
- » Montana matches Federal Interstate funds with 7% state funds, while other parts of the Federal Highway Program are matched with about 13% state funds.
- » All state funds used to match Federal funds and maintain the system come from system users via fuel taxes and other user fees.
- » Each cent of Montana gas tax raises about \$5.9 million which is used for:
 - * matching Federal-aid
 - * maintaining thousands of miles of major highways
 - * funding a cost-effective state-funded construction program
 - * refunds, programs for off-road use, state patrol, city and county road maintenance and debt service
- » Montana is solely responsible for maintenance such as snowplowing, patching, and sealing, at an annual cost of \$10.5 million in state funds.
- » Montana's Interstate accounts for 25% of all travel, but only 2% of Montana's public road miles.
- » Montana's Interstate has 813 bridges and 227 interchanges.

Interstate Display at the Capital Rotunda



Where Has the Interstate Display Been?

Capital Rotunda	July 1-7
Montana Contractors Association	Jul 8-28
Montana Department of Transportation	Jul 29-Aug 2
Transportation Commission Meeting	Aug 14-19
Kalispell Motor Carrier Association Convention	Aug 19-24
Lewistown - Heavy Highway Builders Reunion	Aug 30-Sep 6

For information about how to request this display for your function contact Lana Hedlund at (406)444-9234 or E-Mail U3589@long.mdt.mt.gov

Is Funding for Montana's Interstate System In Jeopardy?

The Federal Transportation Funding Program is being reauthorized in 1997 (refer to page one) with potential negative impacts for Montanans. Under current law, rural states with large transportation systems and low population bases receive funding assistance from states with large populations and small systems. However, proposed legislation would change the funding structure so that each state would receive only the amount of funds it generates. Montana's highway system would suffer greatly under this

scenario. As a large state with a small population Montana would be unable to collect enough fuel tax to make up for the lost Federal funds from other states (See Chart C). It is vital that Congress understand the needs of Montana and other states with similar funding issues. The Interstate System was created to enhance the lives of all Americans by increasing safer travel, insuring national defense, promoting economic growth, and gaining leadership in world trade.

Chart A

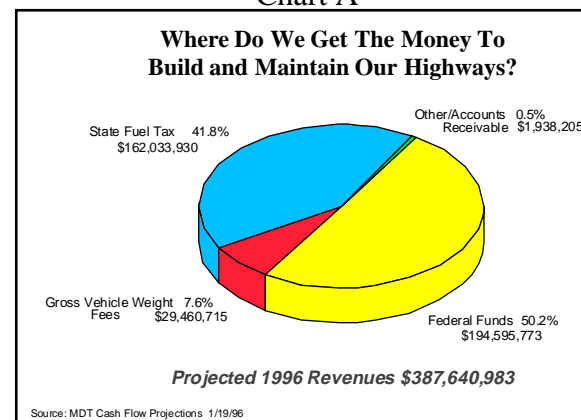


Chart B

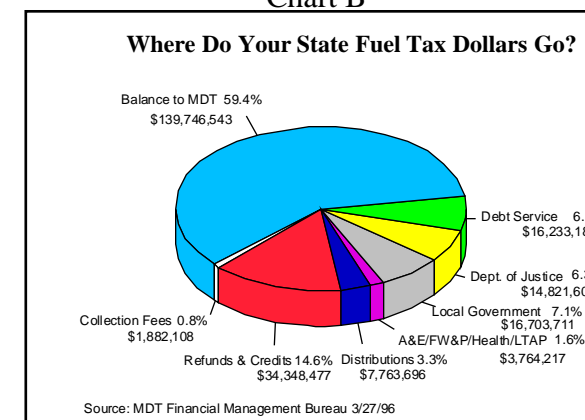
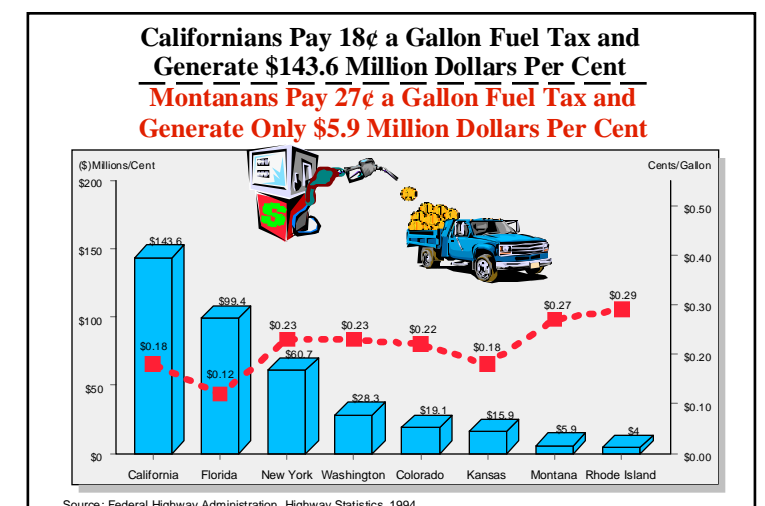


Chart C





Case for Rural Transportation

Continued from page 1

✓ The 4.3 cents in Federal fuel taxes which is currently diverted to general fund programs should be redirected to transportation uses.

✓ Rural Transit and Intelligent Transportation System needs should be addressed.

✓ Freight rail as well as bike and pedestrian transportation are important elements of the intermodal transportation mix.

In Summary...

Perhaps one of the strongest messages delivered to Secretary Peña by many of the panelists was the importance of highways to a rural state like Montana. Secretary Peña noted "it is clear that Montana's economy depends heavily on its roads." The uniqueness of Montana's rural character and the importance of being connected across vast rural distances was also recognized by many of the panelists. Senator Baucus made note that First Lady Hillary Clinton once told him that "Montana is not rural--it's mega rural, it's hyper rural," to which he added "that is why our needs are very different from the rest of the country."

Management Systems Under Way

The Systems & Mapping Section is working on developing and implementing three of the six ISTEA management systems: Public Transportation (PTMS), Congestion (CMS) and Intermodal (IMS). Initial output is scheduled for spring of 1997.



Management systems are multiple databases working together to assist decision makers in selecting cost effective strategies and actions to improve the efficiency and safety of transportation systems.

Here are brief definitions:

PTMS - This system provides systematic processes to collect and analyze data detailing the condition and performance of transit assets.

CMS - This system provides a "systematic process" that produces information on transportation system performance and alternative strategies to reduce congestion and improve the mobility of persons and goods.

IMS - This system combines data from different modes of transportation facilities and systems. This will allow MDT to better invest in high-quality multimodal transportation related improvements.

Governor Appoints Bruce Barrett as Task Force Chairman

On August 28, Gov. Marc Racicot appointed Bruce Barrett, MDT Billings District Administrator, to head a task force to develop ideas for finding \$6.5 million needed to complete the estimated \$20 million Shiloh Interchange project in Billings.



The interchange, located just east of the Shiloh Road overpass, would give Interstate access to the expanding development between Laurel and Billings.

Several options for financing construction were discussed at the first task force meeting held on September 4, 1996. Barrett stated "We can reduce the cost. My experienced guess would be we could get it down to about \$3.5 million to \$4 million."

The task force will meet again about Oct. 3 to discuss its options and prepare recommendations for Governor Racicot by Oct. 15.



Amtrak Expands Service

Amtrak has announced tentative plans to resume daily passenger roundtrip train service on the Empire Builder between Minneapolis and Seattle. Montana took a heavy blow last year when Amtrak announced it was reducing its service, but opponents never gave up fighting and the resumption of service is great news for economic growth and job creation in Montana. Amtrak is a vital component in the economic health and well-being of our state. If approved by Amtrak's board, daily roundtrip service will resume November 10.

Nation's First Automated Port is Up and Running

By Daniels County Leader - June 20, 1996



other. Before APP was instituted, people who wanted to enter the U.S. outside of the Scobey port's established business hours had to travel 60 miles to the nearest 24-hour port-of-entry at Raymond for inspection. Now, citizens or legal permanent residents of the U.S. and Canada who live in the Scobey/Coronach area can use the APP anytime if they pass a thorough background check and agree

to abide by a number of basic rules.

Washington D.C. and Helena representatives of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) were in northeastern Montana on June 12 for the Grand Opening and dedication of the nation's first fully automated port-of-entry 14 miles north of Scobey. The port, which features a voice-activated gate and remote video inspection, allows qualified travelers to enter the United States from Canada, and vice-versa, when INS inspectors are not present.

INS officials worked closely with the U.S. Customs Service and the Canadian Government to develop the program, which is called the Automated Permit Port (APP). Immigration Canada has opened an equivalent northbound lane into Saskatchewan, Canada using similar technology.

"The beauty of the Automated Permit Port is that it allows pre-approved, local residents on both sides of the border to cross as their schedules demand while voice verification ensures we maintain the integrity of the border without having to provide 24-hour staffing," said Donald Whitney, District Director of INS' Helena District. "The Automated Permit Port is one way we're helping make INS work better and smarter and provide better service to our many valued customers."

Scobey and its Canadian sister city, Coronach, share more than a border. A number of local residents farm land that straddles the border; some children who live in one country attend school or play sports in the other; and several people who live on one side work on the

To use the system, a traveler must enter his/her PIN number and correctly state a previously recorded phrase. A computer compares the voice print and PIN number and, if everything matches, raises the gate. As a backup, a camera and telephone allow INS inspectors in Raymond to remotely inspect travelers at Scobey and, if admissible, permit them to enter the United States. Similarly, if travelers heading north encounter problems entering Canada from Scobey, they will be able to communicate readily with Canadian immigration officers in Regway, Saskatchewan.

INS plans to extend the use of fingerprint, hand geometry, retina and signature biometrics along the U.S.-Canada border and anticipates providing 24-hour automated coverage at Whitetail in the near future.

Union Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads Merge

The \$5.4 billion marriage of Union Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads won approval from federal regulators who rejected arguments that creating the nation's largest railroad would inhibit competition west of the Mississippi. The three-member Surface Transportation Board unanimously sanctioned the merger. The ruling, which sets 35 conditions designed to minimize the deal's anti-competitive aspects, became official August 12th.

MDT Upcoming Events....

Anti-Icing and De-Icing Seminar - Butte

October 22 - 23

Transportation Planning Division Conference

"Working with MDT" - Whitefish

October 23 - 24

Transportation Commission Meeting - Glasgow

November 7

Public Involvement Training - Helena

December 2 - 5

For More Information on Any of These Events

Call 1-800-714-7296

THANK YOU!

Thanks to the Daniels County Leader
for its contribution of the
"Automated Port" Article.

We also encourage you to send in any
articles you would like to see
published in the NEWSLINE.

Montana Community Transportation Enhancement Program Progress Report As of September 1996

The following is a summary of projects within each phase of the CTEP process

Phase I - There are currently 8 projects in the Proposal and Development Stage.

Phase II - There are currently 49 projects in the Agreement Development Process.

Phase III - There are currently 120 projects in the Project Development Process.

Phase IV - There are 46 Projects in the Ad/Award & Construction Stage.

New Phase IV Projects since May:

2nd Ave N-Main AFB - Great Falls

City Wide - Virginia City

Sun Prairie Landscaping

Rocky Pt/Hillcrest Path - Polson

Bike/Ped - Manhattan

McCarthy Park - Townsend

Landscaping - Seeley Lake

N. Main/Lawrence Park Trail - Kalispell

Courthouse Landscaping - Columbus

Walkway Lighting - Poplar

Bike/Ped Path - Chinook

Landscaping - Hardin

Senior Center - Bridger

Landscaping - Dillon

Yucca Theatre Rehab - Hysham

UPRR Depot Rehab - West Yellowstone

Bike/Ped Facility - Sheridan County

Millstone and Markers - Missoula

Capital Restoration - Helena

Heights Bike Trail - Billings

Interpretive Sites - Chouteau County

Phase V - There are 27 Substantially Completed / Completed Projects.

For further information regarding CTEP projects contact Mike Davis (406)444-4383 E-Mail
U1972@long.mdt.mt.gov or Ed Hedlund (406)444-0809 E-Mail U3589@long.mdt.mt.gov

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Reader Response

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Planning Division
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Or you may respond via E-Mail to:
Sally Yarnall U8003@long.mdt.mt.gov

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